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SUBJECT: REO BASRAH EAC MEETING ON 04/14/2007

REF: A) BASRAH 026, B) BASRAH 023

CLASSIFIED BY: Dan Wilhelm, ARSO, REO Basrah, Department of State.
REASON: 1.4 (d)

11. (S) Summary and Introduction: The Regional Director chaired a meeting of the expanded Emergency Action Committee (EAC) on April 14, 2007 to discuss the continuing incidents of indirect fire (IDF), including the attack of April 13, in which four housing trailers were damaged, and three personnel narrowly avoided serious injury. Attending the meeting were the Acting Regional Security Officer, Management Officer, Information Management Officer, Public Affairs Officer, Acting ORA Chief, and representatives from the Strategic Counter-Intelligence Directorate (SCID), KBR, and Triple Canopy. The Committee resolved to continue the course of action decided upon at the last EAC meeting (April 10. See ref. A). It was agreed that more could be done at all levels to expedite the move to the Basrah Air Station (BAS), and that more should be done to protect the personnel at the Basrah Palace compound while preparations for the move are underway. To limit the likelihood of casualties at the Palace compound, the Committee agreed that the REO needs to press for a better offense, while at the same time, improving our defense. End summary.

12. (S) The EAC members agreed on the need to "weather the storm" in order to effectuate an "organized and timely move" as first put forth in ref. A. The RSO and Director explained that in order to do so, we need to further minimize the exposure of personnel to IDF. The RSO explained that the practice of overstaying the prescribed time limits spent in the trailers, the wearing of only ballistic plate-carriers (smaller, lighter vests), and unfastened helmets is insufficient protection against the more frequent and accurate IDF that we have been receiving. He therefore announced that more stringent controls would be put into place. Personnel will be permitted to spend up to three, one-half hour blocks in their trailers, but must sign in and out. (The previous policy was up to one hour at a time in trailers.) Personnel will also be required to properly wear their full PPE whenever outside of hardened cover. The Director and RSO explained that a "zero tolerance" policy would be in effect for those who choose to disregard these personal protective measures. To alleviate some of the stress, we are working to install satellite television in all of the hardened buildings and are acquiring individual hardened accommodations on the FCO compound, which we will be made available to REO personnel.

13. (S) The Committee also expressed frustration over the delay in the relocation process. We appreciate the extensive attention and assistance we have received from the Department

and Embassy Baghdad, particularly the Management Office. We are aware that there were obstacles in commencing construction of the overhead cover project (OHP) at the Parsons camp and were told it would commence on April 15. However, construction has been delayed pending a notice to proceed to the contractor. We are living on borrowed time, and each day this move is delayed, the risk of death or serious harm to REO personnel increases. We therefore request that the process for the OHP and funding for the relocation project be approved with all due speed. The latter will enable KBR to commence the modifications to the Parsons camp necessary to accommodate the REO, notably life support facilities, and begin transferring equipment to the Air Station.

14. (S/NF) We also note the increase in counter-IDF activity by MND(SE) and appreciate Embassy Baghdad's support in acquiring additional resources for this purpose. (See ref B.) Nevertheless, with the closing of three other British bases in Basrah, attacks on the Palace compound are not subsiding. This creates the perception that no efforts are being made to counter the attacks, and severely impacts upon morale. We are consulting with MND(SE) to see if additional assets, such as close-air fire support, would assist in curtailing IDF attacks. If so, we would appreciate Embassy Baghdad's support in securing these assets during the transition process.

15. (S) The Director held a "town hall" meeting for all personnel on April 14. The Director, RSO and Management Officer discussed the situation. As in the past, the Director emphasized that, for all personnel, their continued presence at the REO is voluntary. The RSO reiterated that every person at the REO should be made aware that if the level of IDF attacks continues, it is probable that casualties, including deaths could occur. Personnel expressed concerns about the additional restrictions and the Director and RSO advised they would revisit the situation later this week.

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